

My name is Ed O'Neal and I was privileged to serve on the Norfolk, Virginia Electoral Board from 1998 to 2006.

An essential part of the foundation of our republic is the opportunity for all qualified citizens to elect their representatives through a secret ballot in an atmosphere free from intimidation, that is, in a public place. In order to ensure that only qualified persons vote, election officials must maintain an accurate database; and that requires positive identification of potential voters at the time of registration. Illegal votes dilute the legitimate votes of all voters, regardless of political persuasion.

The National Voter Registration Act has made it easier to register but, unfortunately, it has also made it easier to register without adequate identification. Because of this it is even more imperative that voters be accurately identified at the polls. In simpler times, citizens voted close to their homes with their neighbors manning the polls. It was readily apparent when an interloper attempted to vote. In our mobile society, that is no longer true. Positive identification is absolutely necessary to protect the votes of legitimate voters.

In 2005, the City of Norfolk experienced a massive surge of applications, the vast majority of which were submitted by a third party organization. Of some 5,000 applications. Many of these applications were questionable, some were simply mistakes on the part of the applicant and approximately 1,000 were denied. Of those denied, 213 applications contained Social Security Numbers which the Social Security Administration reported did not belong to the named applicant. Some numbers were those of deceased

persons. Seven hundred and sixty one felons denied having been convicted of a felony. The Commonwealth of Virginia keeps a database of all felons whose rights have been restored and none of those had had their rights restored. Signatures on some applications did not match signatures already on file or on applications subsequently received from those persons. An employee of the third party organization admitted to having completed 14 applications, and having obtained the names from a local telephone book.

As you can see, there are forces at work, regardless of their good intentions, which have the potential to degrade the integrity of voter registration rolls. Investigating questionable applications is tedious and expensive, yet critical. The provision of the Help America Vote Act which requires statewide registration systems is a very positive step, however, as the 2008 presidential election approaches, there is growing concern about the ability of registrars to maintain database integrity due to questionable tactics on the part of third party registration organizations. The legal process against registration fraud moves slowly and is difficult to prosecute because of the necessity to prove that a fraudulent action was willful.

Many election officials believe that there is a crisis looming, however, it is not in the electronic voting equipment that has occupied the attention of the nation. The validity of an election can not rise above the quality and accuracy of registration records. In the short run, positive identification at the polls will go a long way toward resolution of this problem. The future of our nation and of our form of government hinges on our system of elections. I urge you to take immediate action to ensure that the votes of legitimate

voters are not diluted by fraud by requiring positive identification at registration and at the polls.

Further, we need to be able to clean up our lists of registered voters expeditiously. The National Voter Registration Act forbids prompt removal of voters who miss two federal elections and fail to respond to two notices from the registrar. Currently we must wait FOUR YEARS before removing these people. It's simply bad business to clutter our lists with extraneous names. It increases the chances for error and it costs money. Voters whose names have been purged can always cast a provisional ballot and we will accommodate them.